



US Army Corps  
of Engineers  
Baltimore District

# *The Corps' pondent*

a newsletter by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the residents of Spring Valley

May-June 2002

## ***Soil removal to begin at seven properties***

*by Maj. Michael Peloquin  
Spring Valley Operations Officer*

In April, the Corps received additional federal funds from the Department of Army to support work activities identified in the 2002 approved work plan.

Among these activities is the Time Critical Removal Action, or TCRA, of arsenic-contaminated soil on seven properties, six of which are in the AU Park/Fort Gaines area and one in the Spring Valley area. We have been meeting with property owners to coordinate the soil removal.

Site preparation work is scheduled to begin in mid-June, followed by removal activities in July and August.

At the Corps May 21 meeting with TCRA property owners and adjacent neighbors, we strongly urged the seven families to accept the Corps' offer to temporarily relocate during the removal period.

We believe this is necessary to ensure their safety while mechanical excavation equipment removes at least two feet of soil from the majority of their properties.

They are not being relocated due to potential health risks associated with the elevated arsenic levels. Relocation has been recommended due to home access and work site safety issues.

We estimate that each family will be relocated between two to four weeks. Our goal is to reach a two-week standard for interrupting property owners to conduct the removals.

We expect to complete all seven properties by late summer or early fall. Then we will begin to address other properties requiring soil remediation.

We'll continue to communicate and work with both impacted property owners and the wider community in the prioritization and scheduling of future removal actions. Once the draft work plan for the broader non-time critical removal effort is completed, the public will have the opportunity to provide comments.

During the upcoming soil removal, the Corps' contractor will employ dust suppression techniques and regularly test the air to ensure dust levels are in the safe range. The Corps will make



File photo shows soil removal at a residence in New Jersey.

*(Photo by Severson Environmental Services Inc.)*

*(continued on p. 2)*

# Soil removal to begin (continued from p. 1)

additional information available on these protective measures as the project moves forward.

Beyond the planned protective measures, we recognize that some neighbors may desire to take additional steps to avoid exposure even farther.

To meet individual needs, we have included below *Prevention Tips for Spring Valley Homes Undergoing Soil Remediation*, a Spring Valley advisory recently published by the D.C. Department of Health.

While these guidelines were generated for property owners who are remaining in their home during excavation, neighbors concerned about their exposure can also use the following D.C. Department of Health tips:

## **CLOTHING**

- Clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in soil.
- After working in a dusty area such as the garden or yard, change clothes before entering your home or consider wearing coveralls.

## **HOME CARE**

- To prevent dust build up, clean floors, window frames, windowsills, dining tables and countertops regularly.
- To prevent entry of fine dust into your home, consider covering your outside windows with plastic sheeting.
- Avoid dusty conditions that increase your chance of exposure, such as working outside your home on windy days or being outside while earth moving equipment is operating.



**File photos showing excavation and soil removal at homes in Montclair, N.J.**

*(Photos by Severson Environmental Services, Inc.)*

- Change the filters on your heating and air conditioning unit regularly. By upgrading the filter type, you can increase the ability of your unit to collect small dust particles.
- Always wash your fruit and vegetables thoroughly before eating. To avoid dust from settling, consider covering fruits

and vegetables sitting on an open counter.

## **CHILDREN**

- Remember to wash children's hands often. Important times are before mealtime, naptime and bedtime.
- Keep play areas clean. Wash bottles, pacifiers and stuffed toys regularly.



# More work at Sedgwick, AU, Glenbrook Road

The additional funds secured for this fiscal year will allow the Corps to proceed with the investigation of potential burial sites associated with the "Sedgwick trench," a 1918-era testing site located in the area of present day Sedgwick street.

Geophysical surveys were conducted of this area last year, and several anomalies have been recommended for further investigation. This work is expected to begin in August.

In other work, soil removal is scheduled to begin in June at designated American University athletic fields and lots. Associ-

ated with some of these grid removals will be the investigation of subsurface anomalies.

Additionally, the grounds near the Child Development Center that are outside the playground area will also be remediated. The area within the playground was cleaned up last year.

Workers will also remove several grids of arsenic-contaminated soil in the area known as the Small Disposal Area adjacent to 4801 Glenbrook Road and near American University's Kreeger Hall. Most of this area was cleaned up last year.

The burial pit excavation on Glenbrook Road is finished for now. The 4801 side of the pit has been cleared of all ordnance, glassware, arsenic and other chemical contamination.

A subsurface retaining wall was installed to divide the pit so the 4801 side could be permanently backfilled.

This work was completed in May and restoration of the remaining portion of the 4801 property will begin in mid-June. The 4825 side of the pit has been temporarily filled with sand. Work there will resume at a future date after a new access agreement is reached with the property owner.

In other project news, the area-wide sampling effort is nearly finished.

To date, 1,348 of the 1,483 properties and lots within the Spring Valley study area have been sampled. Of these, 146 required follow-on grid sampling. To date, 144 of these have been grid sampled.

For more information on project activities, please visit the Spring Valley website at <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>. Or call our toll-free information line at 1-800-434-0988.



AU's CDC grounds that will be remediated this month.

## ***D.C. Mayor's Scientific Advisory Panel Meets***

On May 29, the Corps provided a project update to the D.C. Mayor's Spring Valley Scientific Advisory Panel.

At the meeting, the panel agreed with the project partners' recommendation on the 20 parts per million cleanup level for arsenic-contaminated soil.

Maj. Peloquin reported on key sampling results. Since sampling began last May, the Corps has taken over 3,250 individual sub-

surface samples. To date, only one sample taken below 12 inches and seven at the 12-inch depth had arsenic levels above the 20 ppm.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, or ATSDR, also summarized its finding from its March exposure investigation of 32 residents living at properties with high soil arsenic values.

The investigation included hair and urine testing as well as dust sampling in 13 homes.

The biological testing showed low levels of arsenic exposure that would not be expected to cause any health problems.

The formal report from the investigation is expected later in June.

ATSDR is also planning to conduct a second targeted exposure investigation later in the summer. ATSDR staff feels residents will have a higher possibility of exposure then.



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## Restoration Advisory Board Update

The May 14, 2002, Spring Valley RAB meeting began with an update by Maj. Peloquin on the current status of the following:

- project-wide geophysical effort;
- work at American University;
- soil removal on properties in the residential time critical removal action.

After questions about the various technologies used today to locate buried objects and their practicality in Spring Valley, Peloquin said that all known technologies have limitations. Consequently, whatever technology is used, there is no guarantee that every single metallic object in the ground will be located.

Regarding other questions about the priority of the geophysical investigation of the properties, Peloquin pointed out that a comprehensive rating system has been devised to rank every parcel of land within the boundaries. Those most likely to have buried objects will be investigated first.

Since there is no 100 percent guarantee that all objects will be found, RAB

member Davis Robinson reiterated his assertion that the RAB should pursue property owner indemnification from the government. He believes that the government should protect current property owners from property value loss and liability associated with any Army related materiel discovered in the ground at any point in the future.

Peloquin stated that to the best of his knowledge, it is unprecedented for the government to issue such indemnification, but property owners always have recourse through the Claims Service process.

RAB member Kent Slowinski enumerated his list of five concerns with the soil-sampling plan adopted by the Corps, D.C. Department of Health and the EPA, and implemented on the project. Slowinski asserted that too much emphasis was placed on surface sampling and not enough on sampling at depths below six inches.

Peloquin pointed out that the collective decision to focus on the top six inches of soil stems from the fact

that the range represents the greatest exposure to the public. He said that while it is true that many residents or landscape workers will interact with soil below six inches at some time while living or working on properties, soil below six inches poses a much smaller risk to health than does more frequent interaction with surface soil. The greatest risk for chronic exposure is the top six inches, which is why the EPA favors sampling in this range when characterizing sites for contamination. This argument for testing the top six inches of soil is further supported by the subsurface sampling results reported at last week's Scientific Advisory Panel meeting (see summary on p. 3).

Not all agenda items could be discussed and will be included at the June 11 meeting at St. David's Episcopal Church.

A complete transcript of the minutes of this meeting will be available soon on the Corps website.

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